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1931

Sarah O. Jewett.

Boston 187-

THE

QUIET MISS GODOLPHIN,

BY RUTH GARRETT;

AND

A CHANCE CHILD,

BY EDWARD GARRETT,

[illegible]

WITH SIX ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOWNLEY GREEN.

PHILADELPHIA:
J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.
1871.

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"He did not see Caroline. He was standing gazing over the broad brown field."—*Page* 31.

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JOINT-AUTHORS OF "OCCUPATIONS OF A RETIRED LIFE," "WHITE AS SNOW," ETC.

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THE

QUIET MISS GODOLPHIN.

THE QUIET MISS GODOLPHIN.

THE Cedars had all the somber and sleepy respectability of a second-rate old country house. It stood back from a long quiet road connecting the two Kentish villages of Orpingden and St. Martha's Cray, and there was nothing about it to win a second look from the passer-by. The square, brown brick house, with two windows at each side of the door, and six in the story above, a smooth lawn in front, shaded by the trees from which the place was named, and two narrow flower-beds close to the house, was the residence of Mr. Thomas Godolphin, ex-banker.

Mrs. Godolphin had been dead for many years, and the household had been superintended by an ancient cousin Godolphin, who was laudably anxious to do her duty to her relations, and, in default of a single original idea of her own, adhered with trembling tenacity to custom and standard. Her labors resulted in making the

Cedars a capital family hotel, without any of the idiosyncrasies of a home. Nor did the reins of household government fall from her hands until she had trained her successors to her way of guiding them.

There were three Godolphin girls, and no boy. When the eldest was sixteen and the youngest twelve, they were all sent to finish their education with a limited number of young ladies under the care of a rector's widow in Clifton.

It was four years before they returned to the Cedars. Plain girls they had always been, and they grew into plainer young women. They were very much alike—Maria, Sophia, and Caroline. Sophia was the shortest, and Caroline the tallest, and at first this was the only distinction that most people could draw between them. Had any close student of human nature paid a few morning visits he might have observed that Sophia talked the most, and that Maria always rang the bell for the servant and had the key-basket near at hand. As it was, the old ladies of Orpingden and the Cray labeled them "three sensible, ladylike young women."

But there was one who saw a wonderful difference—one who had known and served them from

their cradles, yet who felt nothing but a civil hireling interest in Miss Maria and Miss Sophia, and yearned with almost motherly affection over the youngest, Caroline.

Nurse Bryant was the widow of a small grocer of St. Martha's Cray, and had taken her situation within six months after her husband's death, changing her humble weeds for the lilac badge of servitude at the Cedars, at Mrs. Godolphin's suggestion that "mourning might have a depressing influence in the nursery."

She was a tall, large-framed woman, of Yorkshire extraction, and during the years of her brief married life had become very popular in the neighborhood, as a Christian housewife of bountiful and hearty humanity is apt to be. There was a good deal of pity felt for her when she was found to be so "ill left" as to be willing to take service at the Cedars. "I told her," said the landlady of the Wheatsheaf Inn, chatting in her parlor, "that after life in her own house, where there was always plenty o' move, what with the young men in the business and the kind, neighborly ways of herself and the good man that's gone, it 'd be a terrible trial to go to that dead-and-alive place, where you mustn't speak to nobody till they've produced the

highest references to their good character eve since they were born. But she's kind o' stunned like just now, poor thing; and says she, 'When the song's gone out o' your life, Mrs. Barnes, you can't start another while it's a-ringin' in your ears. It's best to have a bit of a silence, and out o' that, maybe, a psalm 'll come by-and-by!'"

Very faithfully did Nurse Bryant fulfill her duties, but it was not till the last days of Mrs. Godolphin's life, when she was walking in a shadow which she confided to none but this homely, sympathetic woman, who could check and cheer away the causeless tears without scorning them, that the two learned fully to understand each other. So that when the cry of a new-born babe mingled with the moan of its dying mother, lingering at the edge of life to whisper, "I can trust you, Bryant; you will be good to her," Nurse Bryant answered heartily, "Please God, I will—as if she was my own."

Existence can never be reduced to so perfect a system as to allow of no kindly deviation for those who seek it. Miss Godolphin might punctuate her nieces' lives into school-hours and play-hours, and walking-time, but she could not regulate away all wet Sundays, and hours between the lights, and

stray afternoons when Maria and Sophia went to exchange visits with the other well-bred little girls of Orpingden and St. Martha's Cray. And at all such odd seasons some mysterious attraction drew little Caroline to Nurse Bryant's knee.

The "mamma" of whose manners and opinions Miss Godolphin spoke preceptively, was not the "mamma" of whom Nurse Bryant told, and Carrie liked nurse's biography the best.

When the Godolphin girls were going to school, it was Carrie who kept the chaise waiting two whole minutes while she kissed Nurse Bryant in her bedroom, since the Godolphin etiquette did not allow "servants" the fraternal privilege of coming to the porch to bid God speed to a departure.

It was to Carrie, betrayed by the one confidential schoolmate whom she ever had, that Sophia gave the dignified reproof, "that when she wished to talk about home, she might choose some other one there as her subject than a mere domestic. Nurse is an excellent servant, and it is our duty to be kind to her, and to try and do her good; but it is foolish and vulgar to speak of her as we should of our papa, or of Aunt Godolphin."

Caroline was silent. She had a large organ of adhesiveness and but little hope—a nature that

cherishes even the weight of an accustomed fetter. She had no opinion of herself; and when her ways differed from others' ways, she never doubted that theirs must be best. Not that she wholly gave up her own. She only kept them in the abeyance and modest retirement of harmless weaknesses. If it was wrong to talk much of Nurse Bryant, it could harm nobody's sense of propriety if she thought about her. So the soft, yielding heart shut itself within itself in a security stronger than that of the firmest and most resolute, because unsuspected. There is no secret so safe as the secret that is not known to be such.

Very soon after the young ladies returned from school, Nurse Bryant was removed from the Cedars. Age and infirmity qualified her for admission into an almshouse at Orpingden, and the liberality of Mr. Godolphin liberally supplemented the charity pittance. Of course, the young ladies visited the almshouses. As time passed on they became notable district visitors. Miss Maria cut out for the working-parties, and was famous in broths and possets, all carefully prepared for cottage invalids, although, it must be confessed, at a rate of nourishing power that would not have been deemed sufficient for one course of the Godolphin dinner. Miss

Sophia was celebrated for her unsparing attacks upon dirt and drunkenness, and for the sharp eye that detected every little sham and subterfuge in the tidiness of the overworked and underfed village mothers.

Miss Caroline, appearing to project no light of her own, was complimentarily presumed to refract theirs—to be, as it were, their indorsement, their echo, their anything, which was at once harmonious and insignificant. It seemed as if she were passive, simply for want of call for activity. They were each so sufficient in their own field. The soups and the gruels and the flannel petticoats were made without her—she did a little in that way herself sometimes—in a very small, peddling, amateur way, according to Maria's lights, simply buying a plaid shawl for the rheumatic pew-opener, and taking a pot of black-currant jelly to the gardener's consumptive daughter.

So the youngest quietly accepted the safe and simple paths which her sisters assigned to her. There was not much vigilant reproof needed by the old women in the almshouse. Surely she could at least talk a little on the beauty of resignation and contentment, and report their physical requirements to her elders. She might do this,

and so release their valuable time for higher and harder tasks.

Maria spoke always of instructing and benefiting the poor, and it never entered Caroline's mind to say that from her visits to the almshouse she received far more instruction and benefit than she gave. As there are some people who constantly mistake every truism which comes fresh to themselves for a new sphere of thought, and tediously endeavor to throw back their little light on the very sun from which they derive it, so there are others who fear to give voice to any truth that comes to them by inner consciousness, either misdoubting it, or feeling humbly sure that it must be quite as patent to everybody else. Behind almost every great man we see the dim shadow of another, whose timid whisper he made widely audible. Every new idea has its time of seed, and blossom, and fruit, but it takes more than one life to pass through them all. And an idea may be new, not in itself, but in its place. The stanchest Tory in England would be the rankest and most dangerous Radical in Russia. And however much enlightened Christianity may recognize that it received its gospel from a carpenter's son, and through Galilean fishermen, at the Cedars it would, sad to

say, have been a daring innovation to have suggested that the poor could have any other function in Christ's church than that of the humblest disciples of their social betters. Caroline herself did not know that she dissented from the family opinion. Her head was weaker than her heart, and accepted tenets from which the latter rebelled.

Poor Caroline! There is no life so colorless as that in which intellect and feeling neutralize each other. Her sisters, self-satisfied and certain, developed in energy and force of character, and as their lives threw out a bolder foreground, hers faded dimmer and fainter. The conversation that went on around her, both in close family circle and wider intercourse, she tacitly believed to be in the right spirit, and was ashamed to find herself out of sympathy with it. Once or twice she had ventured blunderingly to express herself; but, since that always called forth sundry sharp logical propositions from Sophia, to which she was only too nervously eager to subscribe assent, her want of zealous co-operation was attributed simply to indecision and indolence of character. With adverse influences around her, and no innate strength to become an influence on her own account, there was nothing for her but quiet submission.

There seemed no reason, or even excuse, for Caroline Godolphin's existence. It might be best described in the words of the old satire, "At morn she rose, at night she went to bed." Duties she had none. It might be her own fault—for who shall say where weakness of character ceases to be a fault?—but anyhow, Caroline, daintily fed, richly clothed, and sumptuously housed, was nobody to anybody.

Except—God be praised for that "except" which plants hopeful possibility in the meanest existence—in Nurse Bryant's almshouse parlor.

Caroline's was not an introverted nature. It said something for her native nobility, that her blank life did not prey upon itself. But she was dimly conscious that she did break the Tenth Commandment towards her dear Nurse Bryant. She did covet the neat, bright little room, which took so much diligent energy to keep it bright and neat. She did covet the independence that could buy an ornament, or make a patch-work cushion, fearless of criticism or scoff. She did sometimes think that she preferred Nurse Bryant's cosy old age to the prospect of her own, well dowered though it might be, with not less than twenty thousand pounds at her own disposal.

All the pleasant excitement of her life centered in that almshouse parlor. Nurse Bryant had tit-bits of good-natured local gossip, and could speak of forthcoming courtships and weddings with commendable zest. Caroline had a womanly interest in these things, and a plain woman's kindly and unemulative admiration of good looks. No lover had as yet come to the Cedars. Of course, no lover would ever come for her, she modestly concluded. No, the matrimonial expectations of the family certainly devolved upon Sophia—and was it a sense of her responsibility in that respect which gave her temper just a little strain?

Not that Caroline indulged in no day-dreams, only she always went into them with a consciousness that they were as remote from possibility as fairy-land was from the Cedars. Useless day-dreams! Are they quite useless? That Scotch old maid, Jean Adam, must have thrown her honest heart into a day-dream before she sang in such sweet true tune,—

> "There's nae luck about the house
> When our gudeman's awa."

And poor Charles Lamb must have had many a vision before the imaginary family of himself and

the lost Alice W. became so pathetically real. Are they quite useless? Was not good Jean more a wife in the true sense of the word than yonder whining little thing, who has nagged her good man into brutality, and now turns round upon him with a law that can take cognizance of wife-beating, but not of husband-badgering? Was not poor Lamb more a father than yonder parent who has never taught his boy to say, "Our Father which art in heaven"? We think so. Oh, you have no time for day-dreams, you mother of a dozen children. You find it quite enough to look after buttons, and washing-bills, and measles. Well and good. You have your blessings another way. We cannot eat our cake and have it too.

But day-dreams that grow into facts, and that are really truer than any facts, do not spring from natures uncolored and undeveloped by reality, like Caroline Godolphin's. You may draw a glorious conclusion from a very slight suggestion; but you must have the suggestion. Who knows what good seeds may perish for want of shower and sunshine? Well, God does, and in spite of all the murk and gloom of apparent facts, it is *our* day-dream that He gives every nature a chance. An insufficient chance it may seem to us. One April day will not

bring the seed to flower. But it will bring out vitality, if there is any. And the summer in heaven is long enough to do all the rest.

Who of us knows the first note of a change in life's tune?

It came to Caroline Godolphin one murk October afternoon, when she found Nurse Bryant with a letter on her mantel-shelf, and tears in her eyes.

"Not that there's any need for me to be a-crying," said the brave-hearted Yorkshire woman, dashing away the despised signs of weakness. "A bit o' rest and a handful o' good nursing will set the lad up again, I'll warrant. It's my sister's son, Andrew Findlater, Miss Carrie. You'll remember he came from Dundee when his mother died a year ago, and took a situation in London, and he's been down seein' me two or three times a-Sunday afternoons. An' now he writes me word he's been queerlike and ailing for some time, and his master says he must lie by awhile. I want to answer him at once, poor orphan boy, but bein' as I was always slow at my pen, and now so blind that I couldn't keep the letters from running over each other, I've had to wait till you came to be eyes to the dark, miss, dearie."

There was no reserve between the two. As in the old nursery days, what either wanted either asked.

"Tell me what I'm to write, nursie," said Caroline, balancing the pen over the paper. Strange that at that moment it oddly flitted through her mind how Sophia would receive such a commission, listen to the old woman's messages, and curtly condense them into some business-like form, beginning: "Your aunt Bryant, being nearly blind, has begged me to write for her, and tell you," etc. etc.

"My dear nephew," said the old woman, pondering, "I am very sorry you are ill; but I dare say you only want a little care taken of you. You must come down here. There is a bedroom to be had just opposite, and if you take it you can use my parlor all day, and you know it has a pretty lookout. You want good country milk and puddings, and a bit of coddling, that's all. Let me know directly if I may take the lodging. My eyes are very weak, so my young lady, Miss Caroline Godolphin, has written this for me, but I can see well enough yet to make prime custards for you. So with best love from your affectionate aunt."

"You must sign Dorcas Bryant yourself, nursie,"

said Caroline. "You may write that as large as ever you like."

"Dearie me, it reads quite pretty," the old nurse remaked, proudly. "Just because I spoke it off. If I'd had pen in hand, bothering over the spelling, the sense of it would kind o' stiffened up. It's a fine thing to keep hold o' the grammar and the kindness together. My nephew Andrew writes a grand letter himself, Miss Carrie. I'll just show you this last, because it's handy, though it's not his best by no means, being as he likely feels weary and weakly."

It was a letter that would have held its own in outward appearance with any letter that ever came to the Cedars. Its wording was brief and simple, closing with the sentence,—

"I have troubled you with news of my misfortunes, auntie, because I shouldn't have liked you to keep back such a matter from me. And, besides, it will make me try the harder to get well if I report progress to somebody kind."

"What is Mr. Findlater to trade?" Caroline asked, involuntarily.

"He's just in a lithographer's office, missie. I don't know exactly what he does—drawing patterns or some such-like. They say he's very

clever at it. But I should think it's bad work for the health,—there's always lots of steam and smoke where printing-presses are. He was always a delicate sort of lad. His father, and two or three of his father's people, went off in declines, but maybe they weren't looked after in time."

When Caroline next visited the almshouse she found Nurse Bryant alone, and very glad to see her, for though Andrew had gone for a little walk, he would be sure to be back in a few minutes. There were some extra pillows in the great easy-chair which had been presented to nurse from the Godolphin nursery, and on the table beside it a glass of water and a plate of grapes were backed by a few books which Caroline knew did not belong to nurse's little library.

Suddenly the cottage door opened, and Caroline Godolphin knew that it was Andrew Findlater who stood before her.

A tall, slender young man, with a slight stoop about the shoulders, dark hair, dark eyes, and a strange look of youthfulness about the face, which gave pathos to its gravity and thoughtfulness. Would not Sophia Godolphin have sat still and square on her chair when he entered? Would

"Caroline Godolphin knew that it was Andrew Findlater that stood before her."—*Page* 22.

not she have addressed him by his unprefixed name, and asked him plain questions about his health and welfare? Certainly. And Caroline knew it. But though she blushed under the sense of her sister's condemnation, still she rose and curtsied to the stranger, and slid into conversation with him through the politest indirect channel of the weather and the look of the country.

It was long, indeed, since she had spent such a pleasant hour in the almshouse parlor. Andrew was very shy and grave at first, but his aunt knew how to draw him out, and Caroline's unassuming kindness had a sweet thawing influence which even his Scottish reserve could not withstand. They talked of Scotland, they talked of the sea, they talked of books. She had read books that he was longing for,—books which had not yet got into cheap editions or old book-stalls. But simple-hearted Caroline could speak of them, could even promise to lend him some, with no more condescension than a sister dwelling at home instructs her brother from the colonies about the pictures and poems produced since he went away. But when, in the course of a day or two, Sophia questioned her about "the condition of Bryant's sick relation," she answered as tamely

as possible that "he seemed a respectable, intelligent youth, in very delicate health, and was much pleased when she promised to lend him some books." Caroline thought that for once she would try to do a kindness in her own small way.

And so she did. And over and over again those cottage conversations were renewed. They opened up a new world to Caroline—a world wherein life, stripped of its upholstery, showed real and earnest, tender and true. She caught glimpses of cottage homes, where parents were conscientious and painstaking, and children obedient and affectionate. From Andrew's own conversation she gleaned facts of lifelong self-denial and self-restraint, lived simply and unconsciously by people of the class which Sophia assumed must be forever the pupils and never the teachers of "their superiors" in position. He talked to her about his work and the prospects he had had, and once or twice, poor fellow, even about the ambitions that he was trying (oh, so hard!) to lay up in the soft perfume of "God's will be done." Nobody else had ever so spoken to her before, and the quiet claim for sympathy came to her heart as warm as the grasp of a friendly hand in a crowd.

Gradually Andrew Findlater crept into her day-dreams—only Andrew Findlater, nothing else—all the figures that grouped round him were misty and nameless. And she pictured him, as she felt he would be, if he lived—good and prosperous, a successful patentee, a diligent merchant—remembering the lessons of his youth, and doing those quiet deeds of genuine charity which compare with ostentatious benevolence as fruitful acorns with gathered roses.

Thus Andrew Findlater and Caroline Godolphin came to know and regard each other. As winter advanced he was oftener confined to the easy-chair, touchingly weak and helpless. His aunt would busy herself out of the room, because her fortitude broke down before Caroline's kindly eyes. As for Caroline, in spite of all her sympathetic interest and sorrow, her life seemed aware of a glow and a sunlight, too strange and sweet for her to dare to question whence they came, or how they would go, or what would come after. As the shadow of death seemed to creep on, the two drew nearer together. He would ask her to read a Psalm to him. He would speak—though rarely and shyly—on spiritual things, and her heart went out to meet him. Bold on the edge of life, he

would dare to utter heavenly hopes and large beliefs which had long lurked silent in his soul and unformed in hers. He had known doubts, just as the healthiest have known illness. But they had passed away, and left no trace but a readiness to sympathize and succor. His humanity had learned that there was divinity in Christ, and to him the love and justice of God were no contradictory terms. The young artisan, in spite of his few books and his tiny account at the savings-bank, had found time to think over these things.

But better even than the bright freedom of thought which his conversation poured upon the unfortunate narrowness of Caroline's education was his resolute linking of precept and practice, his firm belief that a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, nor a bad tree produce good. She had been taught to condemn so much that had nevertheless seemed to her to be true, that this idea came to her like a spring breeze through a long-closed corridor. It was finding God's own hall-mark on jewels that we feared were base, because acids had been thrown over them. It was just what she had always wanted—"the beauty of holiness." And so the Christmas bells had a new meaning for Caroline, and the watch-night peal

may be said to have "rung out the false, rung in the true."

One dim, damp February afternoon it occurred to Sophia to complete a series of charitable visitations by calling at the almshouse. Opening the door sharply upon her quick rap, she came upon Andrew alone, in his easy-chair, half dozing in the twilight, with Bacon's Essays open on his knee.

"I am Miss Sophia Godolphin," she said, taking a seat uninvited. "You must know the name, for this is my sister's visiting district. I am sorry to hear that you have not regained health. I have often asked after you, Findlater; for Bryant, your aunt, was a trusted, and I believe a trustworthy, servant at the Cedars. You must have plenty of time for reading. I hope my sister keeps you well supplied with religious books. What is that? Bacon on Fame? Dear, dear! Not the most profitable reading for you under any circumstances—but especially now. I hope you haven't been given to meddle with politics, like so many misguided artisans nowadays. But however that may have been, you must now put all the things of this life behind you, and think of that which is to come. And if you need any little comfort—beef-tea, or port, or warm stockings—

your aunt has only to come up to the Cedars, and Miss Godolphin will put your name on her sick-poor list."

Only a few words! She did not stay more than five minutes. But so ended the dream wherein Caroline Godolphin and Andrew Findlater had stood on God's level of man and woman. And the awakening showed them as Lady Bountiful and dying mechanic. Well for Andrew that his aunt was out—that no human eye beheld the battle that was fought out in the little almshouse parlor.

Sophia Godolphin bustled home and reported her visit, observing to Caroline that Bryant's nephew seemed a sullen, hard-grained young man, and that she should advise her to be sharp in her efforts to rouse him from his slumber.

As her sister spoke, Caroline's face brightened with a flush quite strange to it. This was more than she could bear without sign. And yet she had borne that her sister should go to and fro in the village, speaking and acting like that for years and years.

Ah, the difference!

She had some engagement at St. Martha's Cray next day, and she resolved to look in at Nurse

Bryant's on her way back. Very quickly did she dispatch her business, and her homeward-set face was grave and firm. It was a lovely day—in striking contrast to its yesterday—one of those first days of spring, whose sweet promise even summer scarcely keeps. No mist, and a soft west wind blowing, very gently now, though, in the night, it had been strong enough to dry the moisture from the ground. Caroline came steadily along the road, on the brow of St. Martha's Hill, and looked neither to the right hand nor to the left, till the brightness absolutely wooed her eyes upward. And then they were dim with tears. Poor Caroline! There was poetry in her commonplace heart at that minute; but she only knew it as bitter pain. There was something else in the world beyond her round of meal-times and fancy work—and was it only *this?*

Suddenly the road turned and descended. About half-way down the descent, leaning over a rude gate set in the hedge, stood Andrew Findlater himself.

He did not see Caroline. He was standing gazing over the broad brown field. She half stopped, and then walked bravely on with the

tears drying up in her eyes. She was close behind him.

"Is this quite a day for you to be lingering in the open air, Mr. Findlater?" she asked, as she paused.

He turned, saying, quietly, "I have only rested for a moment. Good-morning, Miss Godolphin."

She stood still beside him. And he was conscious of a strange incongruity between all the fresh details of her daintily plain morning-dress and his country-made, homely garments, worn shabby through all their careful preservation. Oh, and he would not have noticed this only yesterday morning! Now, it seemed to him a sordid bit of a sad whole—a sign-post between two divergent roads that could never run parallel in this world.

"Mr. Andrew, I think you have walked far enough from home, and had better not even rest in this treacherous breeze."

She spoke kindly, even with a little tender tremor in her tone, but to poor Andrew, still under yesterday's cold shower, it sounded like an assumption of advice which she would not have given—say, to the young squire of Orpingden.

"I shall not stay long," he said, and Caroline

understood the chill of his tone and the troubled waters beneath its frost. She did not stir. Neither of them glanced at the other. There was on Caroline's face a look that had never been there before, and which was there but once again through all her life after. Perhaps God could see it always, but then the calm, ordinary mask slipped aside, and the beautiful soul shone out manifold. An heroic soul was shut in this tame woman. A soul that could starve itself and scarcely crave for food, but must pour out its very life-blood if another needed it.

"Mr. Andrew, my sister Sophia visited you yesterday. I know how Sophia talks. She does not understand. She is different from me. She does not know you. I can't explain better. But I am so sorry! You must know all I mean."

Just a moment's pause. Then, grave and calm, came the answer:

"I do know what you mean, Miss Caroline; you must not be sorry. It was a pain, but this is compensating pleasure."

Caroline's tears were streaming down her face. The pent stream rushes fastest once its barrier is down. A less reserved woman could not have been so frank.

Andrew Findlater moved towards home, and so did Caroline Godolphin. Not unconsciously, as they might last week. He with a bitter thought that the Kentish lane was lonely, and that any hind they might meet would think no more of it than if he met her with any other *protégés*, the old gardener, or the crippled chair-mender. She, with roses on her cheeks and lamps in her eyes, her heart beating to the thought that he was a man beside whom she would be proud to stand before all the world.

Silently for some minutes. Till Andrew said, quietly,—

"I am going away soon, Miss Caroline."

"Going away!" she echoed, and her heart stopped in the one dance it ever knew, and fell faint within her.

"To America," he said, speaking rapidly. "I had often thought of it. I should have been there before now, but for this illness. I think I am strong enough now for the voyage to do me good. Over there there is more room for a man who has nothing but his manhood, Miss Caroline."

"I suppose so," she said, with an indrawn breath.

"I think," he explained, "as the weather is so

fine, I shall go to Liverpool the day after to-morrow, and then I shall be in time to catch this week's steamer, and so cross over before the equinoctial gales."

"Can you be ready so soon?" she asked, mechanically.

"Oh, yes," he answered; "one needs no regular outfit for these short voyages."

"What does your aunt say?" Caroline inquired.

"She does not know yet. She knows I have often thought of going across; but I have not told her it was to be quite so soon. I shall tell her this evening. It's no use plucking trouble till it's ripe, Miss Carrie."

They were nearing the village—houses began to dot the roadside—Caroline Godolphin was in honorable hands. Andrew said to himself that there should be no cause for heartless tongues to "lichtlie" her. He would wear her trustful confidence as we wear relics, in sacred secrecy. At the first sidewalk he paused.

"This is my nearest way. It's a drear road and ill-keepit; but it'll take me sooner home, and I'm a wee weary." His Scotch seldom went beyond an accent or an idiom, and from the smile on his face it was hard to say whether it was now a pa-

thetically playful affectation or the outcome of strong feeling. "I shall see you again before I go, Miss Carrie, shall I not?" There was request in the inquiry.

"I shall come to-morrow. Yes. Certainly." And they shook hands and their eyes met, and said all which could never be spoken between them.

Pass by that evening with those two—one in the drawing-room of the Cedars, and the other in his lowly chamber. Fear to peep at sorrow that is strong enough to cover itself from curious eye.

"You've come to say good-by to him, Miss Carrie dear," sobbed Mrs. Bryant as she opened the almshouse door next day. "He told you afore he told me. I'll not come in with you, dearie. I can't keep from crying when I look at him, and it frets a man, it does, like madness, to see crying. But oh, he shouldn't go, Miss Carrie. If you could reason him out of it! But I'll not keep you longer, it will be wearying him to hear us whispering in the passage."

Caroline softly entered the little parlor, and Andrew, seated at the table, looked up and smiled brightly even before he rose. His simple belong-

ings were already packed away—the side-table was clear of books.

"I am going to ask you to keep something for me," he said, gently, drawing her chair to the fire-place; "only these letters from my friend Robert Nicoll, the poet. He would have been a great man if he had lived a little longer. I don't wish to take them roughing about with me. If I live and thrive, Miss Carrie, I'll come and ask them out of your hand. Will you take them?"

"I will, gladly, proudly," said poor Caroline with bowed head. No conventional hesitations about "depriving him," and so forth. She understood.

"They always said I was clever at my heart," he said, quietly; "and I know well there's something in me that can work better than ever, once I'm strong and hearty. A man may have a worse start in life than just his own head and hands, if but the one's sound and the other's willing."

"Mr. Findlater," whispered Caroline, with her hand on the arm of his chair, "I don't know much about practical things, but I do know traveling is very expensive, and a little money makes a great difference in comfort, and you are so delicate. Oh, I don't know how to say it, but when you have

taught me so much that is good and wise, may not I—won't you let me—help you a little in the only way I can?"

He looked into her eager face, and smiling sadly, shook his head. "No," he said, "you must not do it. God bless you for thinking of it—but no. Just because you are so good, no."

"I would take a kindness from you," she murmured. "You are prouder than I am."

Andrew did not repel the meek reproach. Prouder than her! Proud of her; a man with his hopes (poor fellow!) must not touch charity—even hers.

They said so little during that parting visit. One or two sentences, how brought out she did not recall, Caroline remembered ever after.

"God does not stop in the middle of his work. But He has all eternity to finish in, and need not to hurry."

"God does not plant boiled seeds. All of his planting in our lives is sure to grow into something somewhere. But He may transplant it into another garden, and not gather the flowers for us in this world."

And his last words—his very last—when Caroline turned back for one more good-by,

while nurse was waiting at the door to let her out,—

"Life and immortality are all one for his chosen, Miss Carrie. Here or there, and not so much between. Good-by—good-by—God keep you!"

* * * * * * *

A great steamer plowing the mid-Atlantic, with a stream of sea-birds in its wake. On the quarter-deck ladies reading novels, ladies lounging, ladies led up and down to gain steady footing; gentlemen smoking and chatting. The captain, suddenly called from a lively group, remembered something that made him look grave, and hurried away, and everybody whispered to everybody else:

"This is the time for the funeral."

"Take me down to my cabin," cried one young lady, with disheveled yellow hair. "I can't stay here to see it. It would kill me. So horrid!"

"You won't see it here," answered her escort, coolly. "They won't bring a steerage corpse among saloon passengers. It'll be done from below."

Down in the steerage the Prayer Book was waiting for the captain. The sailors were there, and the third-class people, and one saloon passenger, standing side by side with the ship's doctor.

"Poor fellow!" whispered the latter. "A very superior sort of young man, indeed. Scotch peasant class. Found out he knew that clever fellow who wrote 'Bonnie Bessie Lee.' Very well read. Rapid consumption. Sea finished him a little quicker, that's all. Gave me a letter to send home to his aunt; nobody else in the world belonging to him. Believe he knew he was dying when he came on board. Can't think why he came. Shouldn't have been allowed; but who's to hinder? Hush!"

"Well," said a steerage mother, holding up her child to see the sail-shrouded dead, "I allays thought a funeral at sea must be an awful solemn thing; but it just comes to be a kind o' sight as it is on land. They say he ain't got no father nor mother, nor wife, so I guess he won't make much hole in the world. Listen!"

"We therefore commit his body to the deep, to be turned into corruption, looking for the resurrection of the body (when the sea shall give up her dead), and the life of the world to come, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

A heave—a splash—and midway between the Old World and the New, the waters closed over Andrew Findlater.

Never mind the outward wretchedness of his

"We therefore commit his body to the deep,——" *Page* 40.

last days. Never mind the unwept funeral. Never mind the name that earth will not remember even on a tombstone.

"I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord. Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

* * * * * * *

God knows, and nobody else, what some people suffer. People who cannot write poetry or say beautiful things, who do not even recognize the sublimity and pathos of their own sorrow, but hide it as well as they can, even from themselves. Nobody ever knew that a heart broke under the Cedars, on that sweet spring day, when Nurse Bryant came up from the almshouse, crying, with a letter from New York. Caroline did not quite know it herself. Nurse Bryant never suspected anything. The old woman would have said that her Andrew was good enough for any lady in the land; but she would subtly have excluded her lady of the Cedars.

Heart-break! What is it?—the crushing of an apple of Sodom, and the scattering of its internal bitterness and ashes? or the breaking of a vase, not half so precious as the sweet perfumes sealed within it?

Day after day went on in the old way. At first it was very hard; gradually it grew easier; but it was not altogether the old way. A sweet strain of music had passed through her life that must echo there till the end, and must reach other ears, too, though they might be too dull to understand the soft melody.

She had a past now worth having. She had had her blessing and her trial. She had fought her fight. She remained "the quiet Miss Godolphin." But people who spoke to her, at first out of civility, found that there was something worth hearing in her few simple words, and spoke to her again. Maria clung to her, and was soothed, in a brain fever that she had, when Sophia and all her dicta and nostrums only increased the paroxysms. Sophia never absolutely despised Caroline after that, and Miss Godolphin was long in regaining strength, and never reclaimed that share of the household control which in the mean time Caroline had gently usurped. But nobody ever thought her "a wonderful manager" or "a superior woman," though some people confidentially whispered that they preferred "the quiet Miss Godolphin."

* * * * * * *

Mr. Godolphin, ex-banker, died. But the three

daughters, grown middle-aged spinsters, kept up the old place in the same good plain style. They did their share in upholding local society, but they did not keep much company, and seldom had visitors staying at the Cedars. Visitors upset Sophia's methodical arrangements, and she objected when her sisters proposed to entertain a young female cousin of theirs, a Canadian by birth and maternal descent, but now orphaned, and visiting among strangers in England. But Maria and Caroline got their own way. And so one day, into the home of these grave, sedate ladies, walked a young girl, Lena Godolphin, who actually dared to laugh and make merry and look bonnie in the shadow of the Cedars.

"She's a pretty lassie," said Caroline, watching her from the greenhouse, as she went to and fro among the beds culling a bouquet for the dinner-table.

"Yes," assented Maria. Then, after a slight pause, "She's something like you, Carrie. You must have been pretty, dear, when you were young."

"I'm astonished to hear you talking such vanity," said Sophia from the table. "And, besides, Caroline was never good-looking. Let us

hope she makes up for it by goodness and good sense."

It was on the afternoon of that very day, when Lena Godolphin had been at the Cedars for nearly a month, that Miss Caroline was startled to come upon her at the "blue" window of the library corridor bending over a written paper, with a face whose calmness was sadder than any tears.

She started up when she heard a step, and made some laughing remark. But Caroline was not to be put off so: she drew her hand through her cousin's arm, and said, tenderly,—

"My darling! I always thought you were so merry and happy!"

And then the girl turned round and sobbed out her little story on her kinswoman's breast.

"I've known him always—always. He hadn't any mother, and his mother's sister had taken him out to Canada with her to bring up till he was old enough to live with his father. And dear mamma always lived so quietly in a little cottage after papa died. And nobody thought about money, or who anybody was. James Maurice was the cleverest boy in the school, and so kind, and so good. Mamma liked him very much. After he came back to England he always wrote to me. This is

one of his letters. So when I arrived at my uncle's house at Tulse Hill, I wrote and told James so, and then I told my uncle he would be sure to come and see me. Uncle was angry, ready to say anything ever so cross to me at first, but he softened down after, and said it was no wonder I wanted to see James, as his was the only face in England that I'd known in old times. He might come once, but he must be given to understand that he must not come again, unless he was specially invited, which he might be once or twice a year, when my uncle gives an entertainment to his clerks. And he must not write to me, and I mustn't write to him, for I was a young lady, the daughter of a colonel and the grand-daughter of an admiral, and had a large fortune of my own, while James Maurice was the son of a saddler in St. Martin's Lane, and he himself only what my uncle called 'a young man' in a City house. Uncle expected to turn my head with his fine description of myself. Well, James Maurice came, and aunt sat in the room with us every minute of the time, and made so much of me, and talked down to him so, that I nearly went wild. And I've never seen him since, except once when I was in a carriage with aunt. And she saw him, too, and said how

white he looked, and that City counting-houses were often very unhealthy places, and that she thought Government ought to bring in a bill regulating their size and the hours of work, as the City clerks need protection as much as the factory hands—since they seldom have more than their pound or two a week between them and starvation. She thought to degrade James in my eyes," said Lena Godolphin, with lofty scorn.

"My darling!" soothed Caroline. "But since this Mr. Maurice has never said anything to you (and I like him all the better for it), how do you know that he cares much about you?"

In all her sorrow the girl smiled brightly.

"Because I do," she said. "Any woman always knows that—surely! They may make believe what they like. As for saying anything to me, Cousin Carrie, I may be very naughty; but if he had asked me to run away with him and be married, I'd have gone! I suppose it wouldn't have been right, and so, you see, James did not ask it."

"Faith and patience, Lena, love," Caroline whispered; "the world comes round to those who wait, —yes, it does somehow, darling, though maybe a far better 'somehow' than we were wise enough to wish for at first. We can't lose what God keeps

for us, darling. It is safe as a child's curious carved toy which its mother will not let it play with just yet, lest it should break and spoil it. Faith and patience, little Lena."

Only a day or two after, Miss Caroline Godolphin paid a visit to Lena's uncle, on Tulse Hill, and had a long talk with him, and found out that "a young man in a City house" was regarded in a very different light from "a gentleman having an interest in a mercantile firm." In his own words —well-born queen's counsel as he was—"if a man once has a certain position of his own, nobody asks what his father was, or, if he does, he only thinks his lowliness redounds to his son's credit." He added that to his own personal knowledge the Maurices were high-minded, godly people, who might have been very well-to-do, but that, after some early misfortunes, "the old man" had preferred a life-long struggle with debt to what is generally considered a creditable bankruptcy; that James Maurice was a well-conditioned, well-bred gentleman, only, as he naïvely admitted, "if a niece of mine married a young man in a City house, all my circle would cry out, 'Oh, but he must be well connected, or have expectations. Where does he come from? Who does he belong

to?' And upon my honor, Miss Godolphin, within the last ten years I've seen the old man himself sitting behind his counter sewing saddles!"

Before another fortnight had passed, Caroline Godolphin's circle of acquaintance had wonderfully enlarged. It embraced "the City firm," and the St. Martin's Lane saddler, and his grave, noble-looking son. If Miss Caroline Godolphin had twenty thousand pounds at her own disposal to invest as she liked, and if "the City firm" saw a splendid opportunity for enlarging itself by a Montreal branch, could it only find a little spare capital —why should not she and the City firm come to terms? The City firm received Miss Caroline Godolphin as a friend of its highly-valued clerk, James Maurice, and would have always been most happy to forward that young man's prospects in life, but could not do much for a subordinate unless he brought valuable interest into the concern. Now, who more suitable than he, with his Canadian experience, to take the management of the Montreal branch?

When once Miss Caroline Godolphin had won the City firm, her difficulties were over. They had seemed almost insurmountable when she first conferred with James Maurice. First it was hard to

explain to him how or what brought her to him. Never mind how she did it. Never mind how she persuaded him that it would be positively a sin if he did not let her help to make him and Lena happy. Some clue to the secret might be found in her reply to Sophia, when that lady rose indignant "at such a purchase of a husband—such an indelicate, improper proceeding. It all came from the poor girl's being reared in that dreadful country where there were no gentry, or proper sense of rank or station. But it was only a wild weakness, and could have been subdued and disciplined away easily enough. Caroline ought to be ashamed of herself!"

"Stop, Sophia," said Caroline, with a dignity which startled her sister. "I know what it is. I loved, too, in the same way, years ago. Loved somebody who taught me more of God and goodness than I ever learned in all my life beside. I know what it was to lose each other. How I shall not tell you. I have had but little of my very own in life, Sophia. At least I will keep that secret, which I have shown but once to mortal eyes, and then for a purpose. The pain of that loss was a precious pain, Sophia, but if I can spare it to another, I will."

Sophia was shocked out of her proprieties, and forgot to remonstrate, only saying, "You might have left her to get over it as you did yourself."

"Is that the lesson that sorrows are sent to teach us?" asked Caroline, returning to her ordinary gentleness, and Sophia went away silenced, and ran over in her memory all the poor curates, and doctors, and tutors that ever floated in the horizon of the Cedars. But it was not to be expected that she should travel so far out of the region of possibility as to remember Nurse Bryant's nephew; and she never did.

And so Caroline Godolphin made possible the marriage which was presently celebrated between James Maurice and Lena Godolphin.

"A Quixotic thing! An experiment which would fail ninety times out of the hundred!" That judgment must remain uncontradicted, for we fear the experiment will never be tried a hundred times to test it. "No practical woman could have started such a wild-goose purpose." Perhaps not, but thanks be to God, He has given us no chance of seeing what the world would come to if peopled only by practical people.

"Some good has come out of our loss," thought Miss Carrie, as she stood crying behind the bride.

"And though it is transplanted into another life, I can rejoice in its beauty and perfume."

It made a little gossip for Orpingden and St. Martha's Cray, and was voted either "romantic" or "low." But that is all gone by years ago now; and the highest visitors to the Cedars always inquire after "dear Mr. and Mrs. Maurice in Montreal," who are so kind and useful to all the poor stray branches that will straggle into the colonies even from the best-regulated families. Now that everything has turned out safely and happily, people say that they always considered it a most natural and becoming arrangement.

And Caroline plans her little pleasures for others (she cannot help getting the best share herself), and speaks her gentle words, and watches the gray hairs thickening on her head, and thinks,—

"Life and immortality are all one for his chosen. Here or There, and not so much between!"

A CHANCE CHILD.

A CHANCE CHILD.

THERE had been a funeral from a little, old, deep-windowed house in the chief street of Dingwall, Rossshire. An old maid's funeral, attended only by a grave, decorous, "writer," two young men, strangers in the place, and a girl, little Mary Dallas, who had no more right to that name than she had to anything else

in this wide world of ours. A "chance child," with a black veil over all her history previous to the day when the "writer," Duncan Gair, put her, a two-year-old baby, into the charge of worthy Miss Vass, with such sum of money as paid a little more than her expenses, but was not to be mentioned beside the value of the sterling godly upbringing that she received.

Miss Vass had been a scrupulous and a proud woman, with the pride of a race of decent farmers; and she had taken two days of consideration before she had written her consent to Mr. Gair's letter, inquiring whether she would undertake the control of the worse than orphan baby. The payment for so pleasant and womanly a duty was a sore temptation to her pinched table and thinning wardrobe, and her yearning clinging to the town and home of her birth. But, welcome as the money might be, Elspeth Vass was not the woman to do for its sake what she would not have done without it. She had referred to many good books and to sundry portions of Scripture, and had wrestled long in prayer. Elspeth was not one to display her mental processes, except as they involuntarily showed in the few dry sentences of her tardy reply:

"That, seeing what was done could not be undone, and that the Lord had expressly declared that He himself would not hold a child responsible for its parents' evil ways, unless it followed in the same, she did not see that it would be inconsistent with her duty as a Christian woman to undertake to do her best to direct the bairn to better paths."

She had added, "though it was overlike to be ill guided by its hereditary nature, if there was any truth in birth or breed," but under the double reflection that Ezekiel says nothing on that point, and that it was a queerlike thing for a single woman to write to a bachelor, she had drawn her pen through those lines, and fair-copied the letter without them.

It was no fairy child, of high-born grace and lustrous beauty, that Elspeth Vass took from the arms of Mr. Gair's old housekeeper. Just a thin-faced child, with gray eyes and light-brown hair, coarsely dressed in a thick woolsey, with no mother's pride wrought into braiding or frilling.

"I didna think I could tak sae kindly to ony wean in my auld age," said the Lowland housekeeper. "It's no in me to be unkind to a bairn, God forbid! but I've just passed them by lik

An' she's no bonny, and she's backward wi' her tongue. Master says that that failin' will be worth a tocher to her if she keeps it when she's grown. It's the way men talk, Miss Vass, wantin' to have all the crackin' to theirselves, and us to mix the toddy to help them on. But if mony a ane canna help frae lovin' an auld dumb dog, that was never a beauty at his best, just because he loves them, what for am I a fule to be taken wi' a wean that tuk to me? She has a kind o' way as if she was thankful for little things that maist bairns take as their right. Ye'll hae an easy handfu' o' her, Miss Vass."

Miss Vass was rather doubtful. She could not forget the child's parentage; and, being accustomed to walk safe paths of antecedent and precedent, she was not sanguine enough to hope that she might have come across that exception which proves the rule. But with all her rigid strictness, she was not a prejudiced woman; and when the little girl showed herself gentle and docile, her kind old heart opened readily to her, though her strong principle never neglected to apply the wholesome discipline which her womanly consciousness taught her was most likely to check any dangerous tendencies in this hopeful shoot of

a tainted tree. Mary was brought up in habits of punctuality and unremitting industry, of self-denial and self-control. Miss Vass watched carefully over the subtle moral influences of conversation and general reading, even surrendering her national laxity of judgment upon Mary Queen of Scots; and to satisfy the girlish yearning for a heroine of beauty, love, and pathos, supplied her place with the image and story of sweet, pure Magdalen of France.

And so, for full fourteen years, the young girl lived with the old woman in the little old-fashioned house, the only home they had either of them ever known. And truly happy had those fourteen years been, albeit their quiet calendar of steady plodding in the common day-school, little household duty, and diligent evening needlework, had been enlivened by no red-letter days more startling than a drive to Strathpeffer, a tea-drinking at the manse, or a day's trip to Inverness.

Mary had grown up a healthy-looking, well-mannered girl, useful about the house, and clever at her needle, but with no more prettiness than good habits, good temper, and superfine neatness are sure to produce. As was only natural, Miss Vass had occasionally certain private cogitations.

Mr. Gair had said not a word about her ward's parents, beyond the simple fact that they and their child were no credit to each other. She did not know which of them supplied the funds which the lawyer doled out. She could not form the slightest idea of their respective positions in life, nor whether Mary was far from the scene of her birth, or unsuspiciously near it. Like the wise woman that she was, she reflected that if she could not repress these wandering wonderments, much less could the child, so much more immediately interested. Therefore she resolved that no unwholesome mysteries should surround the secret, like ghouls about a corpse. There it was, a sad and serious truth, to be recognized, and solemnly covered up, without prurient peep or touch. So when Mary was a lassie just entering her teens, Miss Vass did not repress her timid hints, but met them boldly and truthfully, as she would had it been a story of death instead of disgrace. Truthfully, tenderly in utter truthfulness, she answered the questions with which Mary sought to probe the world's ways about such matters, offering no insulting pity or weakening consolation. It pained her—pained her honest, virtuous heart, doubtless, far more than bitterer things had pained

"My child Mary," said Miss Vass, laying her thin, pale hand on the girl's warm shoulder.—*Page* 65.

poor Mary's mother's—to see the child, spiritually the child of her own soul, go about her daily duties with a graver face and a lower voice than before. But she took no notice. Only once when Mary was sewing, with a thoughtful face and an occasional sigh, Miss Vass ventured to say, with a dramatic imitation of lightness, whose success astonished herself,—

"A penny for your thoughts, Mary bairn."

"I was thinking," said candid Mary, "of a fable that our master read to us once at dictation class. How there was a man doomed by a wicked spirit to wander, without a friend or a penny, through a desert country. But the man was attended by a good genius, and wherever he came the good genius provided him with friends and home, and found money for him, and dug wells for him, and made trees grow over his path. But then we know there are no genii, after all;" and the fingers resumed the sewing, and there came another sigh.

"My child Mary," said Miss Vass, laying her thin, pale hand on the girl's warm shoulder, "there is God. Need you turn to these poor fables—though I own they are pretty enough—while you have the true histories of Joseph, and

David, and Esther? Let the ancient heathen that were born in the dark, and the modern heathen that choose it, talk in riddles about fairy and genii, fortune and luck. Let us call Him by the name He taught us — God our Father. Our Father, Mary bairn! Let us trust Him, Mary. He never asks us to trust Him till we have proved Him. The youngest beggar-child, before it can know the want of bread, has been fed a deal more than starved. Need you wish for genii, bairn? Does not the angel of the Lord encamp about them that fear Him, and deliver them? He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water-springs. Mary bairn, the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, and if we are his, then He and his are ours. Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed—body and soul, bairn, heart and head."

That night Mary had kissed Miss Vass with a warmth that showed she had received her heartening words in all their underscore of emphasis. And the good old maid had lain awake some little time thinking of the girl and her future. The hints about this she had conveyed to Mr. Duncan Gair had elicited nothing but the reply that Mary would

be expected ultimately to depend upon herself, and that he was sure she had been so reared that she would find it easy. With a prayer for the lassie's well-being, temporal and eternal, she had fallen asleep, to be awakened by the sunbeams, and Mary's voice a-lilting blithe as ever—and it was nothing but blithe.

Miss Vass was one of those women who sit well in the saddle of life till the last, and die quickly, before their foot is out of the stirrup. She was only ailing for a day or two before she died, and was even up and dressed—in her afternoon dress, too, lace cap, point collar, and pearl brooch—when death came. She had not broken her habits for him. It was the woman's version of the royal spirit that takes a sick man to the battle-field, to drop dead of disease before the bullet can reach him; that gives the dying captain voice for one more conquering command. It was sense of duty to be done as long as possible,—and once more.

No "last words," so called. Her last words were to give Tibbie Seer, the charwoman (for they kept no servant), some currant scones for a relish with her tea,—"she'd had a hard day's work, poor body, and didn't look overstrong."

So is it often with the bravest and best. What is death to them, that they should say his litany? Do we stop to cower and tremble before the outside porter of our Father's mansion? Straight on, straight in, with the same step that we always walked. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

It was all over. Tibbie Seer stayed in the house from the death to the funeral, and Mr. Gair came to and fro, and the nephews in Aberdeen wrote to appoint the day of their arrival for the funeral. Mary Dallas lived on, lonely, amid her breaking home; lonely and sad, as the fondest daughter bereaved of the best of mothers, but not dutiless, and therefore not comfortless. Miss Vass had left everything arranged, with a kind and righteous arrangement, as became a Christian. Her furniture and the current amount of her little annuity were to be made over to her nephews. Their father, the husband of Elspeth's only sister, dead long ago, had paid the debts of old Mr. Vass's long illness twenty years before, and had been kind and brotherly to Elspeth in her days of penury. In justice to his children, one sickly and the other married and struggling, she must return them what she could. It was not adequate to the

debt she owed their father; and so, thinking of the little great-nephews and nieces, growing from and wearing out so much, she had firmly set aside her natural leaning to the better-provided Mary, and to the money and the furniture she had even added, "and all my wearing apparel." Mr. Gair told Mary this; and in all her grief the girl arose to fold and arrange and pack for the benefit of others. She even went through the little store of lace, carefully repairing the slight decays which negligence would soon reduce to utter worthlessness. It was her last service to her friend, to make her bequests as valuable as possible.

But something there was for Mary's self. The little black paper-profile of Elspeth Vass when a girl. It had its history. It had been procured as a gift for Elspeth's lover, who had immediately after gone away to Edinburgh, and had forgotten the plain, grave woman in the far north, until he remembered to send back her picture and her true, sensible letters on the eve of his marriage with somebody else. It was no secret in Dingwall; for, against Elspeth's wish, he had been inclined to parade their engagement before he left for Edinburgh. But she did not make a moan, nor run away, but took his ring from her hand, and stopped

working at her homely *trousseau* and household plenishing. She wore out the first, piece by piece, as she needed it, and used the other to brighten her old-maiden abode. Sorely, sorely did the false lover misunderstand this brave and sound nature; but she was avenged in the galling sincerity which crept into his self-comforting formula, "that she had never really cared for him, being worthy of some one far better." Also the little pearl brooch, and the silk-bound, embroidered album, wherein Miss Vass had stored the quaint, queer bits of literature and art which had crossed her own humble by-path—the striking metaphor remembered from the Sabbath sermon, the verses written by local talent upon local interests in the local journal, the flower-painting on rice-paper bought at the laird's lady's stall in the charity bazaar, even one or two caricatures by that clever lad Bob Rose, who went to London, and got some of his things into *Punch*, and died young.

All these for Mary Dallas, quietly described as "my dear and dutiful pupil." Little things truly, scarcely worth so much as the oldest household thing that was to go to the strange nephews, but precious to Mary, with a preciousness beyond the highest commercial value—something that could

not be bought. The visible traces of a good, true life that had lovingly mingled with her own. The thought of them, and of all that they suggested, lay at the girl's sad heart, like the pure guardian snow round the patient flowers in winter, while Mr. Gair told her that she was now to be sent to London, to live with and assist a widow lady, who was starting a boarding-school in the suburbs; and explained that her allowance of twenty pounds per annum (just half what it had hitherto been) would cease entirely when she came of age. Mary was to go first to Edinburgh, and rest a day and a night with his old housekeeper's sister, and then she was to go on to London, where his own brother, a solicitor in Gray's Inn, had engaged to send a responsible person to meet her at the railway station, and conduct her to her destination.

Mr. Gair was not an unkindly man, though his old housekeeper described him as "ane o' thae canny bodies, that hae lockit theirselves up sae safely, that they dinna ken whaur to find their ain key;" and there was in his manner to Mary much of that sort of careful consideration with which we provide for the transit of a valuable and fragile parcel. But Mary did not notice this, thinking so much of the precious portrait and jewel and book

that bore their testimony to so much more. In a sort of unconscious, natural way, she felt that what we have once had we can never lose, except by our own will. And she thanked Mr. Gair so warmly, that he clapped an extra padlock on his heart, in self-defense, lest she should find the missing key, and enter the castle by storm! And then she went away and packed her three treasures in the safest corner of her old hair-trunk.

An iron-gray, taciturn man was Mary's custodian from King's Cross to her final destination. There was but little of the beauty or majesty of London to be seen in the shortest cut from the New Road to Brixton. And Mary's heart sunk within her at the sight of one dreary street after another, all sordid with dirt and bad weather, and filled with a density of squalor and wretchedness new to the Highland-bred girl. Gradually, however, the roads widened, the houses looked more like homes, and trees and shrubs, albeit in their wintry nakedness, broke and beautified the grim lines of brick and mortar, like pleasant fancies amid stern facts. "It improves towards the end," thought Mary, hopefully.

Alas! Presently the cab turned off the main

road, and struck into a purlieu of new-built villas, duly stuccoed, and standing close together, two-thirds of them with a great white mark upon their windows, to proclaim that the desirable family residence was still untenanted, while all the rest had that painful, cheap newness about the window drapery and visible furniture that suggests households built on sand, and the constant presence of the broker's man. No tiniest patch of green before the houses. No distinction between road and footpath—both in miserable equality of stone and dust and slush. No foot-passengers—and that seemed no wonder—and one or two tradesmen's carts prowling about to pick up new customers, only to be served, however, on the strictest ready-money system.

It was in the heart of this wilderness that the cab stopped. Before a villa exactly like hundreds round it, both in its building and its furbishing, individual only in the little brass plate, engraved, "Establishment for Young Ladies."

Mary's escort stayed with her until he saw her and her poor belongings safely into the hands of Mrs. Lambert, described on her own circulars as the "lady superintendent" of the establishment. Mrs. Lambert led Mary up-stairs, volubly informing

her that the house was very quiet just now, and the "dormitory" in fact empty, since "term" would not begin till next week. Mrs. Lambert knew that "term" would bring at least one day-pupil—the builder's daughter—and one boarder—the child of a widowed Italian artist, who was engaged to teach his language or his art, should any young ladies require either, which understanding had enabled Mrs. Lambert's prospectus to boast of "the services of Signor Barti." Others would surely turn up. Mrs. Lambert argued from innate consciousness that many people put off things to the last moment; and having sown her circulars broadcast, with "term-time" duly notified, she was now diligently touching up her silk dress for that momentous day, before which she would surely have many inquiring callers.

Poor Mrs. Lambert! Her deceased husband had been a struggling man, lacking robustness in health, education, and character. In her own bedroom she had a drawerful of the prospectuses of different defunct companies which he had served as secretary, together with divers specimens of the ores and minerals whereon they had founded schemes of golden wealth—sad relics of a married life which began in sentiment and ended in a weary

shuffle. A strong, good nature would have been sainted in the trials she had passed through; a weak one like hers was merely soured and spoilt. A faded, shifty, and shiftless woman, she stood before Mary Dallas with the Scotch breezes still cool on her fresh cheek, and the bracing teaching of Elspeth Vass still girding up her soul.

"Perhaps you will not mind my leaving you for the present," Mrs. Lambert said. "As soon as you have arranged your little matters as far as you need, you can go down to the drawing-room, and I will join you there by-and-by. You will quite understand that I am very much occupied—new house, new school, and my own two dear, fatherless boys, and a most useless servant, Miss Dallas; and I'm afraid it is against me that I have not been long used to such a state of things."

Mary readily excused her; and after opening her box and correcting the deficiencies of her traveling toilet, she duly repaired to "the drawing-room," where, during an hour of solitude, the coarse drugget with the Brussels-like pattern, the hired piano, the vases on the mantelpiece (with price-tickets still sticking on), the red and blue volumes, ormolu inkstand, and heap of circulars on the table, all became as drearily familiar to her as long-known

faces that have never worn a friendly smile. At last, however, a latch-key rattled roughly into the street-door, and there were noisy steps about the passage and lower stairs, and presently a dirty serving-girl summoned Mary to dinner.

The meal was served in the chamber behind the drawing-room, a narrow apartment looking out into the cramped yard. It introduced Mary to the whole of the Lambert family—shock-headed, shy, uncouth William, a year or two younger than herself, and pale, peevish, cripple Jemmy, of not more than eight or nine. Also it revealed the whole spirit of the scrambling, ill-managed household, where the mistress scolded the maid for delinquencies due half to her own want of foresight, and half to the deficiency of the domestic machinery, and the maid sulked, until goaded to answer back; where the boys handed no dish till it was asked for, and partook of what was offered them without any thanks—Mrs. Lambert's "manners" being an acquirement, and not a growth, and reserved, like her music and French, for the sphere of school-fees.

There were no regular duties for Mary yet. So when Mrs. Lambert disappeared again to her dress-making work in her bedroom, and William

went off with a noisy slam of the street-door (he had a situation at a library and stationery depot not far off), and little Jemmy hobbled back to his corner of the bony old sofa, Mary went up-stairs and brought two or three old ciphering-books, in which she had pasted any little picture or poem that had come in her way. Nothing choice—for those were scarce, and had gone into Miss Vass's album, which Mary was not equal to looking through yet—but cuttings from stray penny-papers; ay, sometimes after they had come as wrappers from the market. But for the poor little cripple, left with idle head and hands, they would be as much a treat as a picture-gallery.

So they were. Jemmy was no engaging child: he had all the repelling faults of neglected deformity—a spiritual attitude of helpless but malevolent self-defense, a greedy claiming and ignoring of unaccustomed kindness. All this Mary found out over her picture-books, in the first afternoon of their acquaintanceship. But she would not see it; she assumed that divine blindness to evil which is the best ground from which to combat it. Or, at any rate, she called it by different names—names that would attract all her sympathies instead of re-

pelling them, shyness instead of moroseness, sheer suffering and solitude.

His childhood and affliction made him the most approachable of the little circle, which was sufficiently unsympathetic to make her presently thankful even for his ungracious attachment. Had Mary been of unadaptable material, her orderly, systematic training would have been but as a stone about her neck to swamp her in this morass of incapability and confusion. But Mary had that true soul of order which does not spurn chaos. She had been trained not to put tangled skeins out of sight, but to unravel them. A stranger and a subordinate in this house, she could not fix hours and frame regulations; and during her first experience of this disorder and irregularity she had hard work to keep any hold of her straying duties. But gradually she seized the very innermost secret of order and method, which consists in doing the right thing at the right season, instead of the wrong thing at an appointed time.

The more people need a right influence, the slower they are to recognize it. Mrs. Lambert began to congratulate herself that her household and her school went more easily than she had anticipated, and to take pride in her superior

management. Jemmy accepted all Mary's little schemes of interest and amusement, and was perhaps too ecstatically grateful for the shilling paint-box that she bought him to think of thanks, while William was sullenly content to find his old grievance, the unpunctuality of meals, gradually fading away. The little foreign boarder whispered to the day-pupils such pleasant rumors of interesting stories and merry games, that when a certain mother fell into a lingering illness, her three little girls were instantly placed with Mrs. Lambert. Nor did a suspicion of the mainspring of all cross that lady's mind, even when, after one half-holiday's upbraiding and final "notice" to her overworked servant, that aggrieved damsel retorted that "she'd ha' been off of her own accord long ago, if it hadn't been for Miss Dallas, who didn't go on the rampage and mix up what you could help and what you couldn't."

It was a godless household. There was a form of religion, to be sure, but it, too, was something to set in the account of the school-fees. Mrs. Lambert kept sittings in the nearest church, and taught her pupils the Catechism, and kept a form of morning and evening prayer on the schoolroom mantelshelf. But the spirit of Christianity did not

show in the morals or manners of the place. And Mrs. Lambert's false standards and wrong-headed maxims were none the less pernicious because they entered ears too young and ignorant to detect their inconsistency and grossness. A soul may be poisoned, as well as a constitution spoiled, by unfit food in infancy. But Mary was in greater danger than any of the others, for standing on a footing less of pupilage and more of equality, and also slowly winning the good graces of the principal, that principal took it upon herself as a kindly duty to hold forth to the friendless girl upon beauty, dress, and possible chances and prospects in life. Nobody but those who know by experience (and all may who keep their ears and minds open) can understand how rotten is the morality and how false the virtue of merely respectable and genteel women. Not worse than the other sex—surely, surely not! But only too ready to be as bad mentally—to prostitute their minds to the level of the other's actual vice, and to stop short merely where the bargain grows too speculative. If their unhappy confidants cross that line, and play a losing game,—"Well, well, well,—and after all their virtuous conversation! They never before believed in such iniquity existing in the world! No, indeed.

As for Cleopatra, and Fair Rosamond, and Mary of Scotland, they were queens, and great beauties, and altogether quite different from this little common creature—pah, drop the subject, and never resume it again, if you please!"

But God's ways are not man's ways. He makes the hour of danger the opportunity for salvation. Mary Dallas dated her spiritual birth from the days of her residence in that moral desert. There it was that God's Spirit quickened the good seed faithfully planted by Elspeth Vass. Like most well-trained children, Mary could not remember when she had not had thoughts of God and religion, and aspirations after goodness and heaven. But the veil of the Temple had not been raised—she had never entered the Holiest of Holies. She could not fix the day when the Secret of the Lord was revealed to her; she only knew that in her spiritual isolation Christ became more than a sweet ideal, a high Example—became Saviour, Guide, Brother, Friend, and All in all. From conscientious duties, prayer and Scripture-study became delights never to be foregone, or even needlessly curtailed. Communion with God became a comfort as real as might have been communion with her dear old protectress, and far higher, lifted be-

yond all possibilities of frailty, change, or death. Even towards the aliens around her she felt a tie which they knew not of. Her divine Brother was theirs also, and she only loved them with a more pitiful tenderness because they did not know to rejoice in the sweet relationship. Years and years after, when she had no more cause to lament a decay in religion than has the sober wife in the golden wedding to regret the shy ecstasy of the bridal morn, she would yet look back fondly on the bright days of her first love, when the barren dormitory was as the gate of heaven, and God's voice pealed through the very commonplace sermons in the parish church.

So she lived, useful, active, self-denying, and liked. Liking, and that a very selfish liking, seemed the fairest growth possible to the shallow hearts around her. Mary had no time to think about that. It is not those who best deserve love who find time to sit down and talk about wasted affection. Mary had always eaten the crab-apples in Miss Vass's garden with a contented spirit; but who so pleased as she when the minister's wife sent them the gift of a box of peaches? She did not heed the lack of love till she found it, and then she rejoiced with an exceeding great joy.

"Presently a little figure came crawling towards her——" *Page* 85.

It arose out of Miss Vass's album and Jemmy's paint-box, and it came about on this wise. One day when he had been very, very ill, Mary had produced her treasure for his amusement, sure that Elspeth would have said it could not have had a better use. She had left it in his room overnight, for he woke early, and worried his brother by his uneasy restlessness. He was confined to his bed just at that time, and Mary did not find opportunity to visit him until about noon on the following day. There she found him propped among his pillows, wrapped in a dirty red shawl, diligently daubing away at Elspeth's own prim little sketch of Inverness Castle, the only specimen of her handiwork which had been deemed worthy of the book. To snatch it away was only to see its hopeless disfigurement, and to drop it in disgust and anguish. Mary sat down at the foot of the bed and wept bitterly.

Presently a little figure came crawling towards her, and long, cold, bony fingers tried to draw her hands from her face. Mary still wept on. Presently the little figure began to heave, and a sobbing wail broke forth, "I wanted to please you, Miss Dallas. I thought I would make it look so much nicer; and I did think it looked nicer," with

the sobbing sigh of a disappointment as great as any artist's over his rejected picture.

Mary roused herself with a womanly recollection that the room was too chilly for the half-dressed child, and she tried to put him back into his bed again, but he clung about her neck. "Don't be angry with me, Miss Dallas. Don't say you'll never be good to me any more. You have been so good to me. Oh, Miss Dallas, won't you forgive me?—forgive me!"

Mary stopped her own tears to quiet him, and though she had not much voice to trust, one or two reassuring kisses coaxed him down upon his pillow, still clinging to her arms and crying, "Forgive me, forgive me! I didn't mean to make you so sorry; I didn't, really! I thought my painting was so pretty!"

"Darling, darling," said Mary, with her quivering lips, "if you could have painted it as well as that Michael Angelo I read about to you last week I should have been just as sorry, for it was drawn by my dear Miss Elspeth, and I so loved her that the way she left it seemed to me to be better than any other way. But I know you didn't mean any harm, and my dear good Miss Elspeth would have

been sorry that my love for her should make me angry with anybody else."

"Oh, I wish I could put it back again," sobbed Jemmy, "for I do love you so dearly, Miss Dallas, and I wish you would love me as you did Miss Elspeth. Mamma always calls me her poor afflicted child, and when I asked her if people would love me, she used to say that if I was good most people would pity and be kind to me. But I want to be loved as if I wasn't lame and humpy, not because I am."

"My darling, my darling!" said Mary, "you've seen how I grieved over dear Miss Eppie's drawing, though it wasn't very grand; but just because it was hers, it was worth more to me than the finest picture in the queen's gallery. And so I love you, Jemmy, just because you are yourself. I wouldn't wish you to be any way different—unless a little stronger, for your own sake; and that, please God, you'll soon grow, Jemmy."

But that he never did. From that day henceforth these two belonged to each other as no others there belonged. Duties are apt to find their way to the fittest hands, and Mrs. Lambert soon left in Mary's charge all those little ministrations which a mother should grudge to anybody but herself.

Slowly and reluctantly, Mary became aware of an ever-increasing weakness and deformity in her little charge, and presently found it her duty to mention this to the mother. With all the ejaculatory grief which is so thrilling and so cheap, Mrs. Lambert bewailed her poor martyred one, for whom her empty purse could procure no scientific aid. Vehemently did she put aside the few sovereigns which Mary offered from her own little hoard, until the kind girl humiliated herself into the very humblest persuasions, when she suddenly became mollified and acquiescent. So it was Mary who paid the fee, which seemed so heavy, for the great surgeon's few doubtful and indeterminate words, and it was Mary who bought the sundry surgical appliances which he vaguely suggested as possible benefit. It was Mary, too, who now and again hired a little hand-chair, to take Jemmy for an airing in the cool of the summer days. She bought no new dress that season, and her last year's straw bonnet was only cleaned and altered. "Missis don't go for to deny herself anything, miss," said the then reigning servant-girl, another strong partisan of Mary's; "and if people's own flesh and blood don't put themselves about for 'em, why should you, that ain't no ways belonging? But don't cry, miss, for

you've a right to do what you like with your own, if anybody has." And Mary held on her path of loving sacrifice.

It was something to see the little, pale, thin face, paler and thinner every day, brighten whenever she approached. It was something to mark the patience which her love and counsel had substituted for peevishness. It was something to see Jemmy, soothing her in his turn, echoing back to her own heart the sweet truths she had taught him—how Jesus loved him, yes, even more than she did, and how he was going to Jesus. She did not want, and she did not receive, any gratitude from Mrs. Lambert, who took everything as a matter of course. But it was something to find that William warmed towards her in his rough, curt way, and sometimes even shyly joined in the cheerful evenings that she spent at his little brother's bedside. The boarders missed her sadly out of school-hours, but the little Italian, now growing a tall girl of fourteen, delighted to act as her deputy, and Mary herself walked in and out among them, generally with some stimulating suggestion, and always with a pleasant word and smile.

The end came at last. Came slowly, oh, so slowly, that the few neighbors who had lived

opposite them long enough to know anything about them looked daily to see if the blinds were down yet. The school was suspended, as it was thought, on the eve of death, but the faint, failing life flickered on for a week after that. But the end came at last.

Sight dimming in the shadow of Death, ears muffled under his touch, and the deformed expression passing from the poor wan face, and suggesting something of how that angel would look, who would be but little James Lambert made perfect and glorified. Heaven was close to him now; it was nearer to him than the bony old sofa or the little paint-box. He had pondered out its beatitudes, as we strive to imagine a new home in our near future. Every now and then the conclusions of his simple logic came in questions that made Mary's heart leap within her.

"I may see your Miss Elspeth, mayn't I, Mary?"

"Perhaps. Just as the Bible tells us we shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob."

"I wonder how I could know her? If she knew you loved me, she might like me, too. I don't even remember papa." Something of the loneliness of the Valley of the Shadow was paining even the simple child's trustfulness.

"Everybody will love you, there, darling. Jesus is there, remember; and He loves you, and knows exactly what you will want to make you happy."

"Take hold of my hand, Mary. I am so sorry for that picture I spoilt; but you did forgive me, didn't you? I wonder I'm not more sorry to leave you. But I have been so very tired. And poor mamma, too!" added the considerate tenderness which God had taught his little one before He called him to himself.

Put down the little hand. Cover the face which now beholds our Father which is in heaven.

"Miss Mary—miss, dear—don't take on so. Them that keeps in their tears always has a dreadful burst out at last. I'm sure you've been as good to him as ever you could be, and you ain't got nothing to repent. The missis, she's grizzled a bit reg'lar this long time, specially over bein' put out of her way, and now she's down-stairs comfortin' herself with that jelly that was sent over for pore Master James—and bother my silly tongue, miss, I didn't mean to say it if it hurts you! Only I don't see why you should be a-breaking your good heart—you that doesn't belong to him."

But Mary wept on.

Nigh two thousand years ago, One who knew all the secrets of humanity asked this question:

"Which of these, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among thieves?"

And the answer came:

"He that showed mercy on him."

It was not very long after little Jemmy's death that Mary Dallas received from Mr. Gair, with her yearly remittance, a notification that it ceased henceforth. She made an arrangement to remain with Mrs. Lambert on payment of a sum of equal value with her former allowance; but when it fell due, Mrs. Lambert was short of money, and it stood over for awhile, and when at last it was paid, it was presently borrowed back again, until it was established as a sort of running loan between the two, and Mary fell into a daughterly habit of just asking for such sums as she needed for her modest requirements.

Time rolled on. The stucco blistered and fell in the wilderness of villas, and their rapidly successive tenants grew shabbier and shiftier. But the school was kept open somehow. Every term changed almost all the day-pupils; and it was really rather trying to Mary's emotions to be

constantly required to bind up hearts that were breaking at parting from her.

Of the household, Mademoiselle Barti, orphaned by the death of her unprofitable opium-eating father, still remained, teaching what he had once taught. She might have earned more elsewhere, but she clung to Mary, who took care that her position was more remunerative than her own, by stoutly withstanding all delays or encroachments upon her salary, and by finding leisure for her to give lessons out-of-doors. But William went away —went off to try his luck in America. Of course his mother resisted his going, sourly and excitedly, with every painful suggestion and sentimental foreboding, according to the fashion of selfish women whenever their indolent wills are stroked the wrong way. It took all Mary's skillful management and soothing influence to let the lad go away in peace and good will, instead of in wrath and defiance. Her kind wishes were stitched into almost every garment of his little outfit. And when Mrs. Lambert found herself chronically disinclined to letter-writing about American mail-time, Mary took up the slighted correspondence, and never less than once a month did the exile receive a closely-covered sheet from home.

Just one of those simple, neighborly kindnesses that cost time and trouble, while too humble and commonplace to return any remuneration of self-gratulation and vainglory. Even William Lambert himself did not fully trace out the influence under which, when sorely tempted to enter a New York dancing den, he turned away with a twinging recollection that to-morrow was the day which generally brought the kind, innocent letter from England.

And so the years passed by: not slowly or wearily. Time never passes so swiftly as in pleasant monotony. Events, and not years, weary us into old age. But it is not everybody who can make monotony pleasant; and then the decay of rust is worse than wear. An appetite must be healthy to enjoy plain food, and a nature must be sound to thrive on small interests. Small interests, indeed! Those young ladies who need the excitement of two cross love-affairs—both clandestine—a ball that does not begin till midnight, and a sensational novel every day from the circulating library, must think the interest very small which can be derived from constant occupation, the contrivances for our own bonnets, little loving notes from some of our removed pupils, letters *pro bono publico* from New York, and snug evening read-

ings of Walter Scott, Miss Austen, and one good monthly periodical, with our adopted sister, Clara Barti. But what do the angels think? And which would sensible people prefer,—the mustard without the meat, or the meat without the mustard? And, generally speaking, that is the choice which we have to make.

What is there further to say about Mary Dallas from the time she came of age until she was thirty-two? All that time the history of her soul was written in characters too minute to show on any page but the pure scroll of a heavenly record. Was it not a waste of the "best years of her life," do you ask? Mary Dallas's life, lived in the strengthening atmosphere of that simple faith which holds—

> "That the happiest year we know
> Is the last which leads us home,"

ignored all such phrases. The duties, and trials, and blessings of each day seemed enough for her, and in them these "best years" were "wasted," in the opinion of those who hold them to be profitably employed only in those pitiful arts of husband-hunting, which secure either failure in endeavor or sorer failure in success.

Did Mary never think of love and marriage? Truly, she did, and most modern girls would have laughed her high ideals to scorn. Happy and occupied, safe from that *ennui* which is the real bane of single life, she was quite ready to admit that a true marriage is the completion of womanly happiness. She would be happier married, she quietly believed—(oh, how she would love and labor then!)—but she was happy enough as she was. If God willed this blessing to her, well and good; if He did not, well and good still. "No good thing will He withhold from them that love Him."

What a strange peace would fall on London drawing-rooms and country coteries if such doctrines entered there!

Older and wiser now, with insight beyond the superficies of life, Mary Dallas often gave a silent thought to her unknown father and mother. In that sorrowful matter it was no longer of herself, but of them, that she thought. Were they living yet? Were they repentant of their sin, or only jealously cautious of detection? Did they—either of them—ever remember and long for their unknown child? Once, when this feeling was strong upon her, the plain, practical woman wrote a letter

of inquiry to Mr. Gair in Dingwall. No answer came for weeks, making Mary feel that the prompt business-like "writer" sought instructions before he replied. But the answer came at last, short and stern, yet with a turn in the wording as if the old man involuntarily wished to disclaim responsibility for its civil harshness. "He could appreciate her feelings, but she must remember that he was not at liberty to violate professional secrets. Also, though he was sure her letter had been dictated only by feelings that did her great honor, yet it became his duty to remind her that all interest in her ended at her majority, and that she must acknowledge that full justice had been done to her unfortunate position by the superior breeding and education to which she certainly did credit."

It was a cruel blow to poor Mary, buoyed up with hope, and the cruelest part was, that she instinctively felt that the cold closing warning came direct from the fountain-head of father or mother —too selfishly fearful of man's detection to be sincerely desirous of God's forgiveness. But she bore it bravely enough, did her work as well as ever, walked out with her pupils up Brixton Hill, and

went to week-night service in the evening, where a stranger preached from the text, "Call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven."

She took it as a heavenly message to compensate for the cruel earthly one—a fresh water-spring in the parched wilderness. And she went home and prayed for her parents, that one strong prayer which remains to weakest, farthest, most helpless love, "Take them in thy hand, O my Father, and as thou knowest now, so deal well with them."

So she lived from her twenty-first to her thirty-second year. That period became a date in her life, because William Lambert returned. He had been a slight, pale, rather cubbish-looking youth when she had "seen him off," with a warm grasp of the hand, twelve years before; but it was a stalwart, brown, bearded man who came to the door at ten o'clock one summer night, and, asking hurriedly "if this was not Mrs. Lambert's," caught Mary's hand and kissed her brow before she could answer him.

Oh, those were merry days! It was midsummer holiday, and there was nothing to do but gratify all the good-humored whims and wishes of the welcome guest. Now a morning spent in

the West End of London, which had never grown too familiar to Mary to seem other than an enchanted fairy-land; now a picture-gallery, now a concert, now a long day in the sylvan glades of Richmond or Kew. They all went—and they all enjoyed themselves: Mary had no special share beyond packing the picnic basket, and keeping the time-table. It was just life struck on the sweet chords of leisure and friendship—and competence—for William had prospered, and they did not need to reckon the railway fares, or to weary themselves for want of a fly. How good Mary found it! And she never troubled herself to wonder why some other lives were set to that tune from beginning to end. Wise-hearted Mary knew that it is better to come to pleasure with a good appetite than to drink its sweet cup till it pall.

William Lambert was to return to America, but not for a year, and after the first wild ecstasies of reunion and rehabilitation, he settled down for the mean time in the home among the grimy villas, only changing it by the hiring of another servant, and airing it by a current of wider and freer social life.

But they had not all lived together more than

two or three months, when Mary Dallas foresaw what was going to happen.

That William Lambert would not go back by himself. That Clara Barti would not wish to stay behind him. They would take Mrs. Lambert with them,—and she would be left alone.

Mary Dallas was human, and she wept in the solitude of her chamber. But she was Christian, too, and heroic, and she dashed the tears away, and confessed her selfishness on her knees before God, and asked for help to be happy in her friends' happiness.

So, walking bravely on in that path of loving duty, it seemed to grow smooth beneath her feet. No maudlin expressions of sentimental self-sacrifice, no sense of injury ever rose from her lips to cloud the lovers' sunshine. "If I am not to live in the pearl palace myself," she thought, cheerfully using the imagery of a favorite nursery story, "at least I can be the good fairy who keeps it bright for the knight and the princess."

And there she had her direct reward. All virtues and vices are repaid in their own coin: only some have long credit; but this came in ready money.

William and Clara were more to each other

than she could have ever been to either, but neither were less to her than they had ever been. Nay, rather more. There were times and seasons when they had a lover-like preference for dual solitude; but the innocent alacrity with which she left them to themselves made them pleasantly welcome the cheerful readiness with which she always returned to them. Clara was jealously kind and considerate to make her own new happiness rather increase than diminish her adopted sister's, and under this fresh softening influence William's esteem developed into all sorts of affectionate attention.

When the year of William's English sojourn waned toward its close, practical arrangements came into the love affair. Practical questions are to love what bridges are to a river—they may either add use to beauty, or destroy beauty forever. Unfortunately, outward influences generally tend to the latter result, and most lovers have to keep their happiness in spite of their surroundings, rather than with their assistance. Happy are those who have one such friend as Mary, ready to discuss the ways and means for a household across the ocean, without any discontented murmur for the vanished hope of some nearer home,

where she could act maiden-aunt, name-mother, and all the other sweet little prerogatives which single life gathers from married happiness.

Naturally enough, the first proposal was, that Mrs. Lambert should accompany her son and his wife to their new home. But against that she resolutely set her face. Life had nothing remaining for her now, she whined, yet at any rate she would lay her bones in her own country. Then would she like to stay in the same house, and keep on the school, receiving from her son (who knew nothing of the unsatisfactory state of Mary's salary for the last ten years) such allowance as would render her independent of change or misfortune? This suggestion she consented to take into consideration, and kept it there until very late in the marriage preparations, when she suddenly informed Mary that, availing herself of such allowance, she should remove herself and her furniture to her native town of Rutland, and share house with one of her early cronies still residing there. Mary heard her out with bright attention, and assenting to all her repining provisions for her own comfort and enjoyment, only made one proposition, that the widow should not name this new scheme to her son until Mary should speak about

it again, which she promised to do in a few days. For Mary knew that Clara's sensitive nerves were already too highly wrought under the sense of a breaking past and a strange future, and that William had cares enough without any needless burden from others' whims and necessities, and that both would be morbidly conscious of any inconvenience or suffering that the course of their lives chanced to inflict upon others. They should know nothing about this measure, which threw her out, homeless, to begin life anew, until she had, at least in some measure, settled herself in some remunerative position.

And before a week was over, she herself cheerfully unfolded the plan to William, making as though it was the very best thing that could have happened to all parties, since she had secured the post of matron in a small home for orphan boys. Just what she had often longed for, she said. She had loved all her old pupils very dearly; but then they had their own fathers and mothers to care for them. These she would have all to herself, to train and to care for, in health and in sickness; and then both William and she simultaneously thought of Jemmy, dead so long ago, and tears came into Mary's eyes, and William softly shook her hand,

and told her she would be the right woman in the right place.

Then followed the wedding, and the last long farewells. Mary was the universal helper and good angel, keeping even Mrs. Lambert up to as high a mark of cheerfulness and complacency as she dared set for that lady's temper—acting as William's right hand and Clara's stronghold. The worst of it was, she was so good, that they missed her almost too sorely when they were out on the Atlantic together. But William, A MAN, determined not to break down, where *a woman* had kept up, and Clara dashed away her tears, knowing that Mary herself would bid her to smile for William's sake.

Oh, blessed are the influences that bind us to our noblest selves!

Years and years. The scene is changed from the grimy wilderness of villas to a plain country-house, with a simple flower-garden in front, and vegetable beds and orchards behind. There is a hum of young voices coming from what was perhaps once the drawing-room, and numberless little shirts are fluttering from the lines in the drying-ground. There is a brougham before the portico,

from which a tall, grave gentleman has just alighted. A doctor.

One of the little orphan scholars let him in, and led him (though he knew the way well enough) to a chamber on the first story.

A cheerful room, although the chamber of hopeless sickness. The carpet was bright, and the looped-back curtains were fresh and spotless, and there was a crowd of cheap little photographs hanging over the mantelpiece, and a work-table beside the snowy couch, that was turned towards the glorious landscape of hill and valley that stretched before the open window.

Its back screened its occupant from the opening of the door, nor did the doctor wait to see her before he announced,—

"Good cheer, Miss Dallas! I have brought you the news of your election."

"God be praised!" said a clear, sweet voice; "only I'm afraid I've got before some poor body that needed it more."

And the doctor drew up his chair to the side of his patient.

Older and thinner, and with the worn look of pain, it was the same peaceful, contented face of Mary Dallas that smiled up from the pillows.

"When you are there," he said, "you will soon be ever so much better. You see, they can muster every appliance to lighten each special form of weakness or pain. And won't you have a stall-full of work at the patients' annual bazaar, and won't you hold a levee of your orphans, juvenile and adult, on every visitors' day!"

The physician had quite an affection for this patient woman, whom he had seen in her active labors in the orphan school suddenly succumb to a hopeless form of spinal disease in so advanced a stage that she must have gone through a world of exhausting pain before she made a sign. "Were you right to conceal so much?" he had asked, gravely; and she had answered, earnestly, "I would not, if I had suspected anything. For I know giving the first trouble is often giving the least in the end. But I thought it was too easily borne to be anything serious!"

That was the secret of much in Mary's life. The brave spirit did not recognize its own superior powers of endurance and thought. Surely the troubles I bear so well cannot be so great as those which weigh others down.

Watching her as she lay, the good doctor saw her eyes wander tenderly round the little room

that had been the sanctum of her middle-age. Mary was one of those women who grow to love chairs, and tables, and walls. Besides, that room had memories of its own. William and Clara had come there in the only revisit they were ever likely to give to their native land, and as Clara had proudly introduced her two children, William, standing on the hearthrug, had pointed kindly to the rows of little portraits on the wall, with the quotation, "Thou hast many more children than she which hath an husband."

"You may go in whenever you like," said the doctor, to recall the thoughts that he saw were overbusy; "once a change is to be made, the sooner it is over the better."

"Thank you, I dare say I shall go next week," answered Mary Dallas; "and thank you again, sir, and all my other good friends, whose kindness has found me such a happy home for the rest of my days."

Alas, it was only a place in the Hospital for Incurables!

Six years after! How long are six years when they are passed lying on a couch—just sometimes

carried, couch and all, to another room or to the garden terrace!

There is a sound of weeping in the corridor. One little nurse cannot restrain her sobs, as she tells another that—

"Miss Dallas went off last night. Seeing how pleasant and cheerful she'd always borne her pain, it was strange to see how glad she was to go when it came to the end. It didn't seem anything awsome to her; one would have thought she'd gone that way ten times before, she was that trustful and sure."

"She'll be missed dreadful," responded the other. "She was the only one who ever went in twice to see that old Mrs. Lomas, who certain can't excuse her ill temper by her affliction, for the cross look had grown on her face long before her trouble came. But Miss Dallas always had her chair stopped at her door, and would sit hours with her till she actually sweetened her up a bit."

"Yes," said Mary's nurse; "and she's wrote on a bit of paper that Mrs. Lomas is to have her canary, and all her books are to go into the house-library, and I'm to have her clothes, and there is some little ornament or other named as a keepsake for each of those young men and women that came

to see her regular—her old orphan scholars. If your great rich men left their hundreds of thousands as just and as kind as she's left her bits of things, the world would be better sorted, I'm thinking. And now I must send to the post. She wrote this letter three days ago, directly the doctor told her what she must expect, and she gave it to me, and told me to send it off directly it was all over. The young lady whose grandma I nursed, before I got the berth in this hospital, hadn't a happier face when she gave me her wedding cards done up ready to be posted directly after her marriage. It's addressed to 'Mr. and Mrs. Lambert, Chestnut Place, Brooklyn, New York.' That's the people she always wrote to. There'll be sorrow there, I expect, when they get this."

Good-by, Mary Dallas, good by. They come in and look at you, with that sweetly-surprised smile on your worn face. Old crippled women are carried in on their chairs to see you for the last time, and they sob with the fervor of youth that they cannot be lifted up to kiss your cold cheek over the coffin edge. Some of your orphans come; your kind physician comes. They say to each other that you were a good, true, Christian woman.

Good-by, once more, sweet Mary Dallas, the wondering smile on your parted lips. Dic find more than even your bright faith expe And did not the King answer and say unto "Inasmuch as ye have done kindness unto o the least of these, my brethren, ye have do unto me"?

THE END.

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